

BOOK REVIEW

MOORE, K., 1995. *A Guide to the Archives and Manuscripts of the Royal Society*. The Royal Society, London, 73 pp. Price £15.00 (UK), £16.50 (overseas).

The Royal Society, London, founded in 1660 and granted its royal charter in 1662, is a prime example of the establishment of scientific societies established throughout Europe during the mid-seventeenth century. The purpose of the Royal Society was to investigate nature in the hope that this would result in English industry becoming more profitable, competitive and efficient (Burke 1985). The Royal Society was not hampered by the strict censorship that restricted kindred societies such as the Royal Academy of Sciences, Paris, where the theories of René Descartes were not allowed to be discussed.

It is scarcely surprising that the Royal Society in nearly 350 years of history has amassed, and is the guardian of, records and other archival material that provides fundamental insights into the development of science in Great Britain and, indeed, western scientific thought in general. However, for all the treasures contained within the archives to be of maximum use they must be catalogued and accessible. Hence it is with a considerable sense of welcome, that this volume by Keith Moore (Royal Society Archivist 1986–1990) with additions by Mary Sampson (Royal Society Archivist 1991–) has been published. The Royal Society did not have an archivist until 1950. As noted by Professor Alan Cowey FRS in the foreword to this *Guide*, the Archives of the Royal Society were scattered throughout the Society's old premises in Burlington House but with the move to Carlton House Terrace in 1967 an opportunity for consolidation presented itself.

The *Guide* consists of two main sections. Part one is a simple listing of the organisational cataloguing of the Archives and Manuscripts. Included are categories such as administrative records, administrative correspondence, scientific papers and correspondence, biographical records of Fellows, manuscript collections, collections of Fellows' personal papers (pre-20th Century), collections of Fellows' personal papers (20th Century), collections of artefacts and archives of other organisations. Part two, the bulk of the *Guide*, is a short description of the main series and it is here that we are able to obtain a glimpse of the wealth of material in the Archives.

The Journal Books contain the minutes of ordinary meetings from 1660. Prior to the 19th Century, letters and papers read before the Society are given in abstract and include any subsequent

discussion. Minutes of the meetings of Council from 1663 include records of discussions on activities, awards, funds and bequests, buildings and staff. The Letter Book Original (1661–1740) provides copies of letters received by the Society. The Society holds the originals of the three charters granted by Charles II (1662, 1663 and 1669), incorporating the Society and authorising its rights and privileges.

The International Relations Archive includes correspondence and papers relating to the Royal Society's relations with the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). Included within the Archive is material on the establishment of and scientific results from the Royal Society Base at Halley Bay, Antarctica.

Original manuscripts of Royal Society correspondence include the *Early Letters* (38 volumes containing 4237 items) including material by Henry Oldenburg, John Beale, John Flamsteed, Martin Lister, Isaac Newton, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, Christiaan Huygens, J. D. Cassini and Cotton Mather. A series of unpublished, or only abstracted, papers from 1768–present are included within the Archives.

The largest and most diverse series of papers within the Archives are classified as *Manuscripts (General)* and includes collections of documents donated, purchased or otherwise acquired from outside sources. The range of this collection is large but includes administrative records, administrative correspondence, correspondence of Fellows and other scientists (including William Buckland, John Flamsteed, John Burden Sanderson Haldane, Marcello Malpighi, Joseph Priestly, Edward Sabine, James Sowerby and Walter White) and selected manuscripts and notebooks by Fellows such as the manuscript of *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* ... by Isaac Newton (1642–1727).

Other significant archival collections include the correspondence of Robert Boyle (1627–1691) with seven volumes of letters, the Boyle Papers of forty-six volumes, the Herschel letters (in all 10 600+ letters of the correspondence of Sir John Frederick William Herschel FRS, 1792–1871, astronomer and secretary of the Royal Society 1824–1827) and the Smeaton Drawings (John Smeaton FRS, 1724–1792, civil engineer, the collection including working drawings for windmills, fire engines, bridges, buildings, canal works and harbours and river

navigations). Additional collections include the Bawden Papers (Sir Frederick Charles Bawden, 1908–1972, plant pathologist), the Blackett Papers (Patrick Maynard Stuart Blackett OM, Baron Blackett of Chelsea, 1897–1974, nuclear physicist), the Dale Papers (Sir Henry Hallett Dale GBE, OM, 1875–1968, physiologist–pharmacologist), the Jeans Papers (Sir James Hopwood Jeans OM, 1877–1946, mathematician, physicist and astronomer) and the Robinson Papers (Sir Robert Robinson OM, 1886–1975, chemist) to name but a few.

Probably the largest single collection of personal papers in the Society's care is the scientific and personal papers of Howard Walter Florey OM (Lord Florey of Adelaide, 1898–1968, experimental pathologist), consisting of 369 boxes or volumes of material, 100 books from Florey's library and 81 boxes of reprints and card files.

The Archival collections of the Royal Society also include museum objects and presentations, such as a valuable collection of chronometers including examples of the work of Thomas Tompion (1639–1713) and John Arnold (1736?–1799), medals, prints and portraits and busts.

The *Guide* concludes with the regulations governing the use of the library and archives, guidelines on access to the archives of the Royal Society, the Bibliography of works referred to in

the text and an index of persons and institutions. The volume is logically presented in clear type and an added bonus are the illustrations which include a pen and ink drawing of Charles II, a sketch of Newton's apple tree in 1840, the Great Melbourne Telescope completed in 1867, sketches of Saturn by Christopher Wren and the portrait of Lord Howard Florey by Henry Carr.

Keith Moore and Mary Sampson are to be congratulated on their description of the Archives and Manuscripts of the Royal Society. The volume should be of great interest to scientists and technologists, particularly to those with an interest in the history and philosophy of science, and should find its way into many an individual's personal library as well as institutional libraries.

REFERENCE

BURKE, James, 1985. *The Day the Universe Changed*. British Broadcasting Corporation, London, 352pp.

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